

DRAFT

Serial No. 09/801,486

Docket No. 20355-PA

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-17 herein without prejudice or disclaimer reserving the right to file a continuation application or take other steps to preserve the novelty of the invention recited therein.

Please insert herein new claims 18-20 as follows:

18. A tracheostomy tube adapted to be disposed on the neck of a patient comprising:

a neck plate having a first end, an opposite second end and an opening between said first and second ends;

a cannula received in the opening in the neck plate, the cannula adapted to be inserted into the throat of the patient;

a first band integrally formed on the first end of the neck plate;

a second band integrally formed on the second end of the neck plate;

means for rapidly connecting and disconnecting the first band with the second band such that the bands, when connected are adapted to encircle the neck of the patient;

the bands and the neck plate being formed from a viscoelastic polymer which is adapted to mold itself to the anatomy of the patient's neck;

wherein the tracheostomy tube may be adapted to be inserted into the patient's throat and rapidly mounted thereto without discomfort and without irritation to the patient.

19. The tracheostomy tube of claim 18, further comprising an adjustment means attached to one of the bands such that the one of the bands may be shortened or lengthened and adapted for the comfort of the patient.

20. A method of attaching a tracheostomy tube on the neck of a patient comprising the steps of:

providing a tracheostomy tube having a cannula, a neck piece in which the cannula is received, a first band and a second band, each band being integrally attached to the neck piece at respective opposite ends of the neck piece, the neck piece, the first band and the second band being

formed from a viscoelastic polymer, a means for releasably and rapidly connecting the two bands and at least one of the bands having an adjustment means;

inserting the cannula in an incision in the throat of the patient with the neck piece disposed against the throat of the patient;

disposing the bands around the neck of the patient and, using the connecting means, connecting the bands to one another;

adjusting the at least one band to comfortably fit the bands and the neck piece to the patient with minimal movement of the cannula within the incision;

such that the tracheostomy tube is attached to the neck of the patient with a minimum of steps and without irritation of the patient's neck.